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Policies and Procedures

Title: Position Descriptions

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Distribution: Headquarters, Areas, and Locations (Provide copy to all supervisors)

Stated are policy, purpose, use, responsibilities, format, and guidelines for preparing position descriptions.

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1. REFERENCES

- Instructions for completing the AD-332 are provided in Exhibit 10 of this DIRECTIVE.
- Position classification and position management policy is provided in DIRECTIVE 431.1.
- Instructions on format and preparation of case materials and position descriptions for research (Category 1) and ST positions are provided in DIRECTIVE 431.3.
- Appointment authorities for Expert and Consultant positions are contained in DIRECTIVE 417.2, EXHIBIT 1.
- Procedures for preparation of SF-52, Request for Personnel Action, are contained in DIRECTIVE 411.2.
- Procedures for filing position classification appeals are contained in DIRECTIVE 439.1.
- Procedures for grievance resolution over accuracy of position descriptions and/or assignment of duties and responsibilities are contained in DIRECTIVE 463.2.
- Procedures for effecting details of employees are contained in DIRECTIVE 422.1.

2. ABBREVIATIONS

- DPM - Departmental Personnel Manual
- ED - Expert (5 U.S.C. 3109)
- EE - Expert (Other)
- EEO - Equal Employment Opportunity
- EF - Consultant (5 U.S.C. 3109)
- EG - Consultant (Other)
- FES - Factor Evaluation System
- FPM - Federal Personnel Manual
- GM/OS - General Schedule

- GW - Stay-in-School Program (comparable to GS)
- IPA - Intergovernmental Personnel Act
- OPM - Office of Personnel Management
- PD - Personnel Division
- SES - Senior Executive Service
- SOD - Statement of Differences
- SPD - Standard Position Description
- ST - Scientific and Professional (i.e., "Supergrade" Research Position)
- WD - Production Facilitating (Nonsupervisory) Pay Schedule
- WG - Wage Grade
- WL - Wage Leader
- WM - Maritime Pay Schedule
- WN - Production Facilitating (Supervisory) Pay Schedule
- WS - Wage Supervisor
- WW - Stay-in-School Program (comparable to WG)
- YV - Summer Aid (minimum wage)
- YW - Student Aid (minimum wage)
- ZZ - Collaborator (without compensation)

3. FORMS

- AD-332 Position Description Cover Sheet (See Exhibit 10)
- SF-52 Request for Personnel Action

4. DEFINITIONS

FES is a classification system involving the evaluation of positions using nine factors common to GS occupations at grades GS-1 through GM/OS-15.

Form AD-332 is a preprinted form which is attached to the narrative position description and signed by the immediate supervisor and an authorized personnel specialist. It serves as the vehicle to officially assign duties and responsibilities and to officially establish the title, series, and grade of the position.

Full Performance Level is a term which refers to the highest grade level assignable to a **particular** position based upon **all** of the duties, responsibilities, and degree of independence assigned to the position by management. A "Full Performance Level" is not officially established until management has described the position at its highest level of operation, and PD has classified the position as to pay plan, title, series, and level.

Interdisciplinary Position is a position which can be competently performed by candidates from any of several occupational groups, series, or academic disciplines, and **there is no predominant knowledge requirement**.

Position Description is a narrative statement of the major duties and responsibilities assigned to a position and the supervisory relationship(s) involved. This statement is attached to a Form AD-332.

Position Description Amendment is a brief, minor change in a description, signed and dated by the supervisor (via an AD-332) and officially approved by an authorized personnel specialist, without rewriting the entire description. Amendments do **not** impact a position's existing pay plan, series, title, or grade. (See section 10 for guidance.)

Pen-and-Ink Change is a very minor "updating" change to an existing classified position description, which does not call for the supervisor's signature. These changes are made by PD at the request of the supervisor to correct typographical errors, update specific references (or other data) within the description, or to change MODE organizational structure codes or titles, where **no** impact on the position's existing pay plan, series, title, or grade is apparent.

Redescription of Duties is a complete rewrite of the position description necessitated by substantial changes in the assigned duties and responsibilities. The sole purpose of this type of action is to correct or bring up to date the description of an existing classified position. This type of action usually does **not** result in a change of the title, series, pay system, or grade, nor assignment of a new position number.

Standard Position Description is a description which covers duty patterns and grade levels commonly found in larger organizations and is used "as is" without modification. (Terms such as "generic" or "prototype" position descriptions are used interchangeably with this term.) SPD's are thus multiposition descriptions. If an SPD factually depicts **all** major aspects of a position to be established, a supervisor may use the SPD. SPD's must meet the standard of adequacy discussed in 10 below. Supervisors of large organizations with fairly standardized work operations which might be amenable to coverage by SPD's may wish to consult the appropriate servicing section of PD on the feasibility of developing such standardized descriptions.

Statement of Differences is a modification to an established/classified position description which describes the distinction between:

- the grade level of the established/classified position and that of the next lower grade level (depending upon whether the position is of a one grade or two grade interval nature), thereby eliminating the need for a fully described position description for the lower grade level, or
- two separate positions within the same organization and identically classified, thereby eliminating the need for two fully described position descriptions. (See section 12 for guidance.)

Supervisory is a term used in the official title to describe a position the incumbent of which has delegated responsibility on a regular and continuous basis for directing, planning, and reviewing the work of three or more subordinate ARS employees who perform the substantive work of the unit. ("Substantive work" is that which **directly** furthers the **purpose** for which the unit was established, as opposed to work which is ancillary to that purpose.)

5. POLICY

A written record of each position's basic duties and responsibilities **must** be prepared and submitted to PD each time a position is to be created or the basic duties and responsibilities of an established position are changed. This includes SES positions; Consultant and Expert positions when employed temporarily or intermittently in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 3109; and IPA assignments.

EXCEPTIONS: See 9 under "**Positions NOT requiring written descriptions**" below.

NOTE: An additional duty may be assigned to an employee without revision of a position description if it does not impact the **overall** duties and responsibilities of the position. However, if the duty assigned occupies a substantial part of the incumbent's time (e.g., 10 percent) and/or would impact the qualifications for the position, it **must** be incorporated in the position description as soon as possible, either by amendment or redescription. When a duty is assigned which impacts the title, series, or grade of a position, the position description will be promptly rewritten and submitted to PD as a "redescription of duties."

Position descriptions will be established and classified **before** the position is filled, for both the grade level at which filled **and** for the full performance grade level.

Except for Details, an employee may not be assigned to a position until a position

description has been prepared, the duties and responsibilities evaluated, and the position classified by an authorized personnel specialist.

The official first-level supervisor (consistent with the organization's Position Staffing Plan) **will** sign and date Blocks 19 and 20 on Form AD-332. When the first-level supervisor is not available to sign, the individual designated as "acting" by the first-level supervisor **will** sign for the first-level supervisor. The second-level supervisor **may** sign and date the form by using Blocks 22 and 23. In **all** situations, the first-level supervisor's name and title will appear in Block 21 of the AD-332 (see Exhibit 10).

NOTE: The supervisory certification on position descriptions covering Schedule C positions must be by persons who are in a confidential or policy-making relationship to the President or the head of the Department or Agency. Such persons must be in a supervisory or managerial position serving under a Presidential appointment, an appointment which requires Senate confirmation, or a noncareer SES appointing authority. Where the immediate supervisor does not meet these criteria, a higher level supervisory or managerial official who does meet the criteria must sign the AD-332.

6. AUTHORITIES

- 5 U.S.C. 51
- FPM Chapters 312 and 511
- DPM Chapters 312 and 511
- FPM Letter 713-37

7. PURPOSE AND USE

The position description officially documents a management decision that certain work is to be performed by an incumbent of a specific position. It is a document used for authorizing payment of public funds, with legal requirements for accuracy and penalties for fraudulent certifications. In addition to serving as the primary source document for grading positions, the position description is also a basic tool for other personnel management uses, such as employment and staffing, position management and organizational analysis, training needs determination, performance standards and appraisals, incentive awards review, appeal resolution, and reduction-in-force competition.

8. RESPONSIBILITIES

Supervisors will:

- Assign duties and responsibilities to proposed and existing positions in the context of established position management principles (as documented in Exhibit 1).
- Encourage participation by the incumbent in the preparation of his/her position description. Though employee participation is not required, it may aid the supervisor in developing the position description.
- Prepare position descriptions in appropriate format and complete the blocks on the AD-332 that are circled on Exhibit 10.
- Certify in Blocks 19 and 20 of the AD-332 to the accuracy of all descriptions for newly established positions, all redescription of duties, and all position descriptions amended to change the assignment of duties and responsibilities before final classification approval can be given.
- Assure work assigned is performed as described in the position description.
- Assure that all elements of an employee's performance standards are reflected in and reflective of the certified position description.

PD will:

- Review position descriptions for adequacy.
- Provide guidance and assistance to supervisors in preparing descriptions.
- Determine if redescription of duties, SOD, SPD, or amendment of description is appropriate.
- Identify, and resolve with the submitting official, any substantive questions concerning the accuracy of the position description, and/or any position management implications surrounding the submitted documentation.
- Assign the title, series, grade, and competitive level to the position based upon the description and other relevant information through application of the appropriate classification standards.

- Specify on the AD-332 the full performance level of each permanent position or state that the position has no known promotion potential. These statements are not used for temporary positions.
- Comply with Departmental preclearance for certain types and/or grade levels of positions (DPM 277, 2-3 and Exhibit 1).
- Make pen-and-ink changes to position descriptions, after concurrence by the supervisor, when the adjustments are minimal and cause no change in the title, series, grade, or pay plan of the descriptions.

9. POSITION DESCRIPTION FORMAT

Research positions (Category 1) and ST positions are described in accordance with the provisions of Directive 431.3.

The FES format (Exhibit 2) will be used to describe all GM/OS positions, including:

- Nonsupervisory positions.
- Positions which are a mixture of both supervisory **and** nonsupervisory functions. (NOTE: Supervisory aspects must be fully documented as per items B and D of Exhibit 2.)
- Positions which are fully supervisory. (NOTE: Supervisory aspects must be fully documented as per items B and D of Exhibit 2.)
- GW positions.

With respect to FES format:

- Descriptions prepared in FES format must contain information adequate for classification of positions under existing (non-FES) classification standards and future evaluation under FES approved standards.
- Existing descriptions of occupied positions which are accurate and do not require extensive change may remain in the existing format until issuance of an applicable FES standard. However, if time and resources permit, these descriptions should be placed in FES format prior to issuance of the FES standard.

SES position descriptions will be prepared in the format shown in Exhibit 3. (Additional guidance and explanatory information on the SES are contained in DPM 920 and related Personnel Letters and Bulletins.)

GS-16/17/18 position descriptions will be prepared in the format shown in Exhibit 4. (Additional guidance and explanatory information on GS-16/17/18 positions are contained in DPM 920 and related Personnel Letters and Bulletins.)

Expert and Consultant positions whose incumbents are appointed under authority of 5 U.S.C. 3109 (pay plan designators ED and EF) will be described in the FES format (Exhibit 2).

WG and WW position descriptions will be prepared in the format shown in Exhibit 5.

WL position descriptions will be prepared in the format shown in Exhibit 6.

WS position descriptions will be prepared in the format shown in Exhibit 7.

NOTE: Positions covered by pay plans WD, WM, WN, and printing schedules will be described in the appropriate format (Exhibits 5-7).

Positions NOT requiring written descriptions are:

- Collaborator (ZZ)
- Student Aid (YW) and Summer Aid (YV)
- Experts and Consultants (EE and KG) established under authority **other than** 5 U.S.C. 3109 (a statement of duties must be provided, however, in Block I-1 of the SF-52).

10. GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

Standard of Adequacy. A position description is adequate if it states the principal duties, responsibilities, and supervisory relationships of a position clearly and sufficiently to provide information necessary for its proper classification.

Principal Duties and Responsibilities. A position description describes those duties

and responsibilities which are regular and recurring, occupy a substantial part of the incumbent's time, and which affect the qualifications required to perform the work.

- The description should list duties in order of importance. This may not necessarily correspond to the percentage of time required by each duty.
- The description must:
 - Show approximate **percentage of time** required for each major duty when the overall position contains substantially different kinds of work (i.e., a "mixed" position).
 - Describe duties in clear, simple, and specific terms. Avoid the unqualified use of such ambiguous terms as "prepares," "assists," "handles," "coordinates," or "examines." State the **nature** of the preparation, handling, assistance, coordination, or examination.
 - Avoid any language that uses gender-specific pronouns.
 - Avoid overly technical and lengthy words. Phrases or terms which convey no meaning outside the immediate office should also not be used.
 - Avoid labeling tasks as "difficult" or "complex." The degree of difficulty should be described instead.
 - Avoid the use of misleading words or phrases. For instance, "conducts research" is not to be used to describe search of files for material.
 - Show the extent of incumbent's authority to carry out the assigned duties.

Supervisory Relationships. This term means supervision received by the incumbent and supervision given by the incumbent. Both kinds must be described in a position description.

- **Supervision Received.** An adequate description shows:
 - Supervisory restrictions and guidance under which the incumbent operates, and employee's freedom to deviate or make changes.
 - The kinds of problems or other matters referred to the supervisor and

others such as program staff or consultants.

- Purpose and extent of review of incumbent's work.
- **Supervision Given.** If the incumbent supervises others, the description must:
 - Identify the organization and/or positions supervised.
 - Show the occupations, grade levels, and size of staff supervised. A detailed account of the work performed by subordinates should not be included. This information is available, if needed, in the descriptions for the subordinate positions.
 - Describe the scope and degree of the supervisor's responsibility for work planning and organization, work assignment and review, and for administrative functions.

EEO Statement

Each position description for a manager or supervisor must include a statement which refers specifically to the incumbent's responsibility for EEO activities. **For application of this requirement** supervisory and managerial positions are defined as follows:

- A **supervisor** is an individual employed by an agency having authority in the interest of the agency to hire, direct, assign, promote, reward, transfer, furlough, layoff, recall, suspend, discipline, or remove one or more employees, to adjust their grievances, or to effectively recommend such action, if the exercise of the authority is not merely routine or clerical in nature but requires the consistent exercise of independent judgment.

EXCEPTION: For any unit which includes firefighters or nurses, the term "supervisor" includes only those individuals who devote a preponderance of their employment time to exercising such authority.

- A **manager** is an employee who has responsibility for directing the work of an organization; is held accountable for the success of specific line or staff programs; monitors the progress of the organization toward goals and periodically evaluates and makes appropriate adjustments; and determines program goals, resource needs, and allocation of resources.

The following statement **must** be incorporated into the position descriptions of supervisors and managers:

- Assures that equal opportunity is extended to all employees supervised, and all candidates for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or nondisqualifying handicapping conditions. Equal opportunity in employment and for employees supervised includes full consideration of eligible minority group members and women in filling vacant positions; holding individual and group meetings to communicate EEO and program objectives; providing career counseling and orientation; enhancing career opportunities through training and development, job redesign and similar techniques; and ensuring full and equal consideration of these employees in recommending promotions, awards, and other forms of special recognition.

Collateral Duties

EEO Collateral Duties

- These are defined as official EEO duties and responsibilities assigned by appointment to an employee **in addition** to the primary duties and responsibilities of the position the employee occupies. EEO collateral assignments have **all of** the following characteristics:
 - The employee who receives the assignment must meet qualification requirements for EEO collateral assignments published in OPM Handbook X-118.
 - The EEO collateral assignment does **not** constitute the primary purpose for establishing or continuing the position, nor is it a primary function of the position.
 - For purposes of the EEO collateral assignment, the employee receives technical guidance and review, but not supervision, from an individual other than the regular supervisor (e.g., EEO official or line manager with overall EEO responsibility for an organization).
 - The assignment does not constitute a grade controlling duty or responsibility (i.e., occupies 20 percent or less of the employee's time).
 - The EEO collateral assignment may be terminated, or reassigned to another employee at management's discretion without complying with

adverse action regulations.

- EEO collateral duties will vary depending on assignments delegated. However, the statement describing these duties must:
 - Be attached as an addendum to the position description of the responsible employee. Use of addenda rather than incorporating EEO collateral assignments into position descriptions will avoid unnecessary paperwork, since collateral duties are assigned by appointment and removed by termination of a collateral assignment. Collateral duties are personal to the current incumbent (i.e., they do not "come with the position").
 - Show what official provides technical guidance and reviews the work of the employee, and describe the nature of this guidance and review.
 - Show the percent of the employee's work time that is spent on the EEO assignment.
 - Describe the duties and responsibilities of the EEO assignment in detail and with sufficient clarity to enable a verification that the duties are collateral (not grade controlling) in nature.
- Standard EEO collateral duty statements are provided in Exhibit 8.

Other Collateral Duties

Other collateral assignments (e.g., Hazardous Waste Manager) have the same general characteristics and limitations as described above under 5 a(l) for EEO collateral duties (with appropriate terminology substituted). Also, such collateral duties are documented in a manner similar to that described above under 5 a(2).

Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization Statement. In keeping with USDA policy, the position descriptions of all program employees personally responsible for the expenditure of Government funds for procurements, **and** all procurement personnel exercising signature authority on procurement documents, must include the following statement:

"Incumbent is responsible for insuring that the provisions of sections 8 and 15 of the Small Business Act, as amended by Public Law 95-507; the provisions of Executive Order 12138, pertaining to women-owned businesses; and Public Law 96-302 pertaining to Federal contract awards in labor surplus areas are

implemented in the procurement activity that he/she is assigned."

Amendments

Amendments must be prepared in the **same** format as the position description being amended, to assure fulfillment of the standard of adequacy. Thus, if amending the "supervisory controls" section of an FES position description, then the amendment must contain the rewritten Factor 2 plus any other Factors or duties that are changing (see Exhibits 2, 5, 6, and 7).

Amendments can be used to reflect a variety of specific changes which are significant, but of a succinct and identifiable nature not impacting the title, series, grade level, or category of the position. For example: addition/deletion of a minor duty; change in the work emphasis of an assignment; correction of position sensitivity code; or minor change in the nature of supervision given or received. Such changes must be amenable to description in comparatively few words. Amendments should **not** be pursued for items such as changing the name of the position's supervisor, updating MODE organizational titles and codes, etc.

To avoid overly burdensome position descriptions, and/or a disheveled appearance there should normally be no more than four amendments prior to undertaking a complete redescription to update the entire position record.

SES and equivalent "Supergrade" positions **cannot** be routinely amended. Discuss proposed changes in these positions with the appropriate servicing team in PD.

11. USE OF INTERDISCIPLINARY POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

The interdisciplinary nature of the position must be identified and discussed in the position description. The position description will be annotated on the AD-332 by PD with the following statement:

"Interdisciplinary position: (Title), (Series); (Title), (Series)."

12. STATEMENT OF DIFFERENCES

Statement-of-Differences is a succinct description of the significant differences between the duties, responsibilities or working conditions set forth in a currently established position description, and those of the position being described. It is a shortcut device which can be used to minimize the need to fully describe each

position in an organization. An SOD is used when:

- An organization contains two or more positions having the same title, series, and grade, but differ in only a few aspects, e.g., assigned geographic area of responsibility or type of case work.
- An organization has an identified level of work, e.g., GS-11, and wishes to recruit at a grade level immediately below the full performance level, e.g., GS-09.

The determination as to whether or not to prepare an SOD in lieu of a full-length position description is a matter of judgment. Generally, however:

- SOD's may be used to describe GM/OS or FWS positions **other than**:
 - Category 1 research scientist positions (GM/GS);
 - Supervisory positions (GM/OS or FWS); and
 - Leader positions (GS or FWS).
- SOD's may **not** be used to describe differences to a basic fully described position description in a different organizational unit or occupational series.
- SOD's may **not** be used to describe duties of a **higher** grade than that of the basic fully described position description.

When preparing an SOD only one position need be fully described. The description of the other position will consist of a reference to the fully described position description (which is attached to the SOD) and an SOD summarizing the major differences.

Whenever the basic description is revised, descriptions of positions covered by SOD's must be reviewed by the supervisor for continued accuracy and usefulness, since these SOD's may no longer be appropriate.

When an SOD is used to describe the distinctions between two grade levels of a position's growth in an organization, the distinctions in the SOD must be in accordance with the distinctions contained in the grade level criteria of the applicable Position Classification Standard. The SOD is used to describe **the next lower grade level** to a previously described and classified position description, provided the classified higher graded position description is attached to the

particular SOD.

When the fully described position is written in FES format, the SOD related to this position must follow the FES format in documenting the differences. For instance, if the differences involve supervision, complexity, and personal contacts (plus duties, of course), then Factors 2, 4, and 6 must be included on the SOD. In turn, PD will assign appropriate FES points to the Factors listed within the SOD.

In **all** circumstances, the SOD will be covered by a properly completed AD-332. The higher graded classified position description and AD-332 will be attached to the SOD.

Responsibilities for preparation and maintenance of SOD's are the same for position descriptions in Section 8 above.

A sample SOD is provided in Exhibit 9.

T. J. CLARK

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Exhibits: **(Not available)**

- 1 ARS Position Management Principles
- 2 Guide for Writing Position Descriptions in FES Format
- 3 Position Description Format for Senior Executive Service Positions
- 4 Position Description Format for GS-16/17/18 Positions
- 5 Position Description Format for Nonsupervisory FWS Positions (WG)
- 6 Position Description Format for Wage Leader FWS Positions (WL)
- 7 Position Description Format for Supervisory FWS Positions (WS)
- 8 Standard EEO Collateral Duty Statements
- 9 Sample SOD and its Related Higher-Graded Position Description
- 10 Sample AD-332